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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001736

SIPDIS

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USTR:A.WILLS AND J.ROSENBAUM, COMMERCE: A.STERN, MCC:
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DEPARTMENT PASS USTR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2014
TAGS: ETRD ECON CVIS CE ECONOMICS
SUBJECT: TRADE MINISTER LOOKS TO TIFA TO BOLSTER TIES TO US
EXPORTERS

REF: A. COLOMBO 1620
1B. COLOMBO 1727

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead. Reasons 1.4 b and e

11. (C) Action request para 2. During a brief meeting on October 19, requested by the Ambassador prior to GSL team's departure for Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) talks in Washington, Commerce Minister Fernandopulle told Ambassador he hoped the trip would provide an opportunity to outline GSL plans on the economy and steps it has taken on market liberalization, and to meet with US exporters. In particular:

--Fernandopulle would like to meet with exporters of poultry (Sri Lanka is in the process of lifting the ban due to HPAI), wheat flour and pulses (Fernandopulle specifically mentioned masoor dhal, a red lentil dhal which we believe is grown in the US. Dhal is a staple in Sri Lankan diets.).

--Fernandopulle will also tout his office's efforts on behalf of US companies (GTech) and IPR issues. Ambassador raised issues surrounding companies in the power sector, with which Fernandopulle was unfamiliar, but candidly referred to as "the most corrupt bureaucracy in Sri Lanka."

--Fernandopulle will also likely ask for expedited US approval of the revised visa reciprocity schedule. The GSL cabinet recently approved a change in fee structure and validity, now allowing US travelers to get 5-year multiple entry visas for US\$100 (current schedule is a one-year visa at a total cost of US\$ 195). Post requested approval to reciprocate in ref A. CA has forwarded the proposal to DHS which has the responsibility for final approval.

A more thorough discussion of overall issues surrounding TIFA talks are in ref B.

12. (SBU) Action Requests: 1) Post requests that Department and Commerce work with Ambassador Subasinghe in Washington to arrange meetings with poultry and grain export representatives or associations for Fernandopulle. US wheat imports comprised 35% of the market last year. One US firm, Commercial Lynks is already a major exporter in pulses to Sri Lanka. The US Poultry and Egg Association has also expressed keen interest in the Sri Lanka market. 2) Also, that efforts be made to note to DHS the high-level interest and trade benefits of the visa reciprocity issue in Sri Lanka.
LUNSTEAD